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to the District of Columbia
Report to 61st Congress. 1910.

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1910a

Union Calendar No. 196.

61st Congress, 2d Session. } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. { Report No. 1003.

BENEFIT OF MORRILL FUND TO THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

April 13, 1910.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

U.S. Cong. H

Mr. Scott, from the Committee on Agriculture, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 24316.]

The Committee on Agriculture, to which was referred the bill (H. R. 24316) to amend an act entitled "An act donating public lands to the several States and Territories which may provide colleges for the benefit of agriculture and the mechanic arts," approved July 2, 1862, and the acts supplementary thereto, so as to extend the benefits thereof to the District of Columbia, has had the same under consideration and begs leave to report the bill back with an amendment, with the recommendation that the amendment be agreed to and that the bill as amended be passed.

The purpose of this act is to give to the District of Columbia the benefit of the Morrill Act of 1862 and of the subsequent acts supplemental to and amendatory thereof for the establishment and maintenance of colleges for the benefit of agriculture and the mechanic arts, and designating George Washington University as the instrumentality through which the fund provided in such acts shall be expended.

Soon after the bill was introduced in the House, in December, 1909, a vigorous campaign was begun against it by representatives of the state universities, who protested against the legislation on the ground that George Washington University as a private institution with (as was alleged) strong denominational proclivities ought not to be made the beneficiary of a grant from the Public Treasury. At a later date the representatives of certain labor organizations and other citizens of the District of Columbia memorialized your committee in the interest of the McKinley Manual Training School, arguing that the fund should be granted to that institution on the ground that it is well equipped to do the work and that as a part of the public-school system of the district no fees are charged for tuition therein.

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In order that those objecting to the legislation from any standpoint might have an opportunity to present their views, exhaustive hearings were held and several days spent in taking testimony and listening to argument. After full and careful consideration of all the facts developed by these hearings and after weighing carefully the arguments brought forward by those who opposed as well as by those who favored the bill your committee reached the following conclusions:

The bill contains two entirely distinct propositions, which may be stated in the form of questions:

First. Is the District of Columbia entitled to a share of the Morrill funds on the same basis as other States, Territories, and dependencies?

Second. If the District of Columbia is entitled to share in these funds, then through what instrumentality may the best results be obtained?

The first question is to be answered by Congress in its capacity as the legislative body of the nation, and your committee recognizes the right of any citizen of the United States to interest himself in the answer which Congress shall make to it. In the opinion of your committee there can be but one answer to this question, and that in the affirmative. The intention of Congress in passing the Morrill acts was no doubt to afford to all the citizens of the United States, who desire to avail themselves of it, the opportunity for collegiate training in agriculture and the mechanic arts through the establishment of colleges in each of the States and Territories. At the time the original act was passed, the District of Columbia, although not designated as a Territory, did have a territorial form of government, and if that form of government had not been changed the District would probably have been recognized as a beneficiary of the law without any special act of Congress.

However that may be the District of Columbia is a political entity, separate and distinct from any other political subdivision of our country. Its citizens can not claim citizenship in any other State or Territory while residing here, and therefore must be denied the benefits of the Morrill acts unless the funds appropriated therein are expended here. The right of the District of Columbia, therefore, as a political unit to share in the funds provided by the Morrill acts is so clear that it has not been seriously disputed. It was even conceded by the most earnest objectors to the present bill.

The right of the District of Columbia to a share of the funds provided by the Morrill acts being conceded, the only question remaining is, through what institution can they be most judiciously expended? And that question, in the judgment of your committee, is one which concerns only the people of the District and the Congress in its capacity of legislature for the District. Your committee recognizes the force of the argument that public funds should be expended through a public institution, and it regrets very much that there is no public school of college grade in the District of Columbia which might be designated for this purpose. But all of the Morrill acts so plainly contemplate the establishment and maintenance of colleges that your committee does not feel as if the spirit of the law would be met by placing the funds within the control of the McKinley Manual-Training School or of any other school of secondary grade.

Unfortunately there is no public school of college grade in the District of Columbia, and the only institution prepared to give the instruc-

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tion called for under the Morrill acts and asking to be designated for the purpose is George Washington University. The question narrows itself, therefore, to the single proposition, shall the citizens of the District of Columbia, although plainly entitled to the benefits of the Morrill acts, be denied these benefits until a public institution shall be created through which they might be conferred, or shall they receive such benefits at once through the instrumentality of the George Washington University?

If George Washington University were a denominational or sectarian institution, as a great many of those protesting against this bill have evidently been misled into believing, your committee would not for a moment consider a favorable report upon this measure. But such is not the case, as the charter of the university, under a recent act of Congress, expressly declares it to be nonsectarian, and in point of fact several denominations are represented upon its board of trustees and upon its faculty.

And if George Washington University were a purely private institution, conducted at a profit for the benefit of some individual or company or corporation, your committee would hesitate long before recommending that this bill pass. But that also is not the case. The most that can be said is that George Washington University is a privately controlled and privately supported institution. It renders a distinctly public service and it has never paid a dividend to any person or corporation. And by the terms of this bill it is given at least a quasi public character by the provision that during the life of this act three officials of the Government shall be ex-officio members of its board of trustees, and by the further provision covering the limitation upon tuition fees that may be charged.

Recurring, then, to the question, Shall the citizens of the District of Columbia be denied the benefit of funds to which it is conceded they are entitled because there does not exist any fully public institution through which such funds may be expended, or shall they receive such benefits at once through the instrumentality that is now available, it has seemed to your committee there can be but one answer. If there existed here an institution of college grade, maintained as a part of the public school system of the District, this fund would of course go to such institution without question. It is a singular fact, and in the mind of your committee a deplorable fact, that there does not exist to-day at the national capital any publicly endowed or supported school wherein the white youth of the city may receive a college training at the public expense. Such provision has long existed in relation to the colored youth through the establishment of Howard University and it is to be hoped that in the near future the children of white parents may receive equal consideration. But for the present the funds carried in the Morrill acts must be expended through George Washington University or their benefits entirely withheld from the citizens of the District.

As originally introduced, this bill made an indefinite grant of the funds to George Washington University, without any limitations upon the time during which the grant should continue or upon the tuition fees that might be charged. It has seemed to your committee, in view of the considerations which appear in the hearings, but which need not be embodied in this report, that there should be a time limit put upon the grant, and the present bill accordingly restricts the designation to

the three succeeding fiscal years. It seemed to your committee also that there should be some limitation placed upon the fees to be charged for the instruction which will be paid for through the funds carried in the bill, and the sum of $20 per annum is accordingly fixed as the maximum that may be charged for tuition in the subjects covered by the Morrill acts. The result of this limitation, as shown by a letter from President Needham, of George Washington University, will be to reduce the fees charged for courses leading to the bachelor's degree in civil engineering, electrical engineering, and mechanical engineering from $600 for the four years, the present charge, to $155 for the four years, a reduction for each student of $455 for the four years' course.

Your committee feels that with these limitations—the time restriction, which will compel the Congress to take the matter up for consideration again at the end of three years, and the requirement that fees charged shall be merely nominal—every reasonable objection to the legislation has been met.

On page 3, line 21, of the bill, the word "current" was inserted by clerical error, and the committee recommends that it be stricken out. With this amendment agreed to, the committee is of the opinion that the bill should pass.

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